

Summer 8-10-2019

# Pooling Power: Engaging Nonprofits in Coalitions for Social Change

Michaela Nee

University of San Francisco, neemichaela24@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.usfca.edu/capstone>



Part of the [Nonprofit Administration and Management Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Nee, Michaela, "Pooling Power: Engaging Nonprofits in Coalitions for Social Change" (2019). *Master's Projects and Capstones*. 942.  
<https://repository.usfca.edu/capstone/942>


This Project/Capstone is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, Capstones and Projects at USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Projects and Capstones by an authorized administrator of USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center. For more information, please contact [repository@usfca.edu](mailto:repository@usfca.edu).

Summer 8-10-2019

# Pooling Power: Engaging Nonprofits in Coalitions for Social Change

Michaela Nee

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.usfca.edu/pna>

 Part of the [American Politics Commons](#), [Other Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#), and  
the [Social Influence and Political Communication Commons](#)

---



UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

CHANGE THE WORLD FROM HERE

**Pooling Power: Engaging Nonprofits in Coalitions for Social  
Change**

by

Michaela Nee  
mjnee@usfca.edu

Capstone Research Report Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the  
Master of Nonprofit Administration Degree  
in the School of Management  
directed by Dr. Marco Tavanti

San Francisco, California  
Summer 2019

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this research is to explore the nonprofit sector's role in social movements and systemic change, the benefits of operating in a coalition, and how nonprofits can leverage and effectively participate in coalitions for systemic social change. While the nonprofit sector has been set at a structural disadvantage in many ways for participating in social movements, it also boasts many unique characteristics and resources that can be leveraged for effective social change that goes beyond daily nonprofit services. Collaboration is a well-known best practice for organizational efficiency and can be enacted in the form of coalitions for nonprofits and other movement actors while engaging in social movements for more effective and unified change. Through an analysis of existing literature and conduction of interviews with coalition and movement experts in the nonprofit sector, this document concludes with recommendations for both individual nonprofits and coalitions as a whole to prepare for social movement work and intentional collaboration for social movement success.

**Keywords:** coalitions, collaboration, social movements, nonprofit activism

## Acknowledgments

Nothing is ever achieved by one person alone. This research is under my own name, but the immense support and incredible people that have worked hard to get me to this point are just as much a part of this.

To my parents Joanna and David, for pushing me to try new things, for the advice, encouragement and shoulders to cry on, for supporting me even in my wildest ideas and aspirations, and for wanting nothing but the best for me. I'm living my dream and it would have been absolutely impossible without the tools and courage you have given me.

To my brothers Mitchell and Brendan, for supporting me and cheering me on through this beast of a project and year, for always reminding me to maintain my inner child, and for being the best people to grow up with.

To Grandpa, for always having hope in the next generation and believing that I would do something good for the world. I grew up with your faith in me and it meant the world to me. I miss you and your stories.

To Parsa, for giving up a year of actual dates with me for coffee shops and study sessions, for having an indescribable amount of patience with me, and for endless support and encouragement in both the highs and lows.

To all of my teachers, professors, mentors and counselors over my many, yet so few, years of living and learning, for giving me the tools, knowledge, advice, and courage to believe in myself and pursue a life of learning and growth.

## Table of Contents

List of Figures .....	v
Section 1: Introduction .....	1
Section 2: Literature Review .....	2
From Nonprofit Missions to Visions: The Leap into Social Movements.....	3
History of the U.S. Nonprofit Sector .....	4
Nonprofit Advantages and Limitations for Social Movement Work .....	5
Setting the Foundations for Successful Coalitions.....	12
Section 3: Methods and Approaches.....	14
Section 4. Hindsight and Wisdom from the Experts.....	16
Section 5: Implications, Limitations and Recommendations .....	22
Section 6: Conclusions .....	26
<b>Appendix A: Guiding Interview Questions and Interviewee Biographies.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Author’s Biography .....</b>	<b>36</b>

## List of Figures

Figure 1. Nonprofit Pathway to Successful Coalitions and Systemic Social Change ..... 23

## Section 1: Introduction

Nonprofits have long served as service providers and challengers of social injustices in the United States and throughout the world. From tutoring to health care services, to sports camps and everything in between, the nonprofit sector is often considered to be the go-to actor for addressing gaps in the needs and well-being of societies. Addressing injustices, however, is not necessarily equivalent with resolving and ultimately ending the injustices themselves. Social movements that bring people and organizations together in coalition to change the systems of oppression have consistently paved the way for change. Systemic change is never an overnight process; it is the result of years of labored community organizing that driven individuals and organizations operate on a grassroots level. In the most reasonable best-case-scenario, years of tireless movement work eventually results in policy and legal changes and a shift in the public's general perceptions or beliefs of a particular issue.

While most social movement organizing happens behind the scenes to address the root causes of injustices, many nonprofit organizations work towards the same vision of a better world but contribute to that vision through a specified activity or service. For example, an education-based social movement may seek to address issues in equity and achievement in the U.S. public education system, while some nonprofits such as Reading Partners address those same issues through the specific approach of providing tutoring services to students to increase literacy. Many nonprofit organizations are intentionally structured to address systemic issues rather than provide direct services, such as Refugees International, a nonprofit that directly advocates for policy and program changes to support the human rights of refugees. All forms of service and changemaking are valid and are a part of the broader change that these organizations wish to see, but there exists an opportunity for service-based nonprofits to engage in broader social change in addition to their regular activities that ultimately advance their own visions for a better world.

Collaborative efforts for social change can transform turbulent, disjointed activities and actors into an organized movement with specific and clear goals and strategies through the effective use of coalitions. The coalition structure has consistently proven to be an ideal form of movement organization and partnership foundation in the field of social movements, as it provides social movement actors the ability to work together, share resources, and combine efforts into a single unified movement voice for augmented power. The purpose of this research is to explore the nonprofit sector's role in social movements and systemic change, the benefits of operating in a coalition, and how nonprofits can leverage and effectively participate in coalitions for systemic social change.



The literature highlighted in Section 2 of this report provides a foundation for the basic aspects of social movements and to explore the niche abilities and advantages of the nonprofit sector to take part in broader social change through social movements. It also discusses widely-accepted best practices that nonprofit organizations can adopt for successful coalition action and systemic societal impact.

Section 3 details the methodology driving the logic of this research. The following section examines and summarizes the key takeaways and lessons from six expert interviews with experienced coalition-builders, changemakers and nonprofits that engage in coalition work for social change. The document closes with implications for the nonprofit sector, recommendations, and limitations of the research that nonprofits and coalitions can learn from and adopt for their own social movement success.

## **Section 2: Literature Review**

Mass changes in societies and institutions through people-powered efforts have been organized and executed throughout modern human history, but this societal phenomenon of human mobilization has only relatively recently become a subject deemed worthy of intensive study. The official term “social movement” was first mentioned by Lorenz von Stein, a German sociologist, in his book *Socialist and Communist Movements since the Third French Revolution* (1848). Despite the rise of social movements across the globe in recent decades, a standardly-accepted definition has yet to be solidified in the field. Social movements have commonly been defined by noted scholars, such as Charles Tilly, as “a series of contentious performances, displays, and campaigns by which ordinary people make collective claims on others,” or simply described by Sidney Tarrow as a “collective challenge” (Feldman, 2016, pp. 4-5).

Feldman defined a social movement as “a group of people working together for a common social, political, or cultural goal” (Feldman, 2016, p. 4), but he also discerned significant differences between a typical “social movement” versus a “social movement for good.” The goal of social movements is to generate policy or cultural change, whereas social movements for good take a step further and aim to generate awareness of issues or populations in need. Social movements for good can be characterized by their long-term commitment for sustained action and advocacy beyond quick policy changes through fixed platforms for change and active participation from stakeholders (Feldman, 2016, p. 6). For the purpose of this research, Feldman’s definition of a “social movement for good” will be the accepted definition in this document when referencing “social movements,” given the long-term action and commitment, intentional partnerships and justice-oriented missions of the movements highlighted in this paper.

## The Nonprofit Sector's Role in Social Movements

### From Nonprofit Missions to Visions: The Leap into Social Movements

While many nonprofits in the United States often feel hesitant to become involved with politics due to lobbying limits and restrictions, they do have the power to become involved and use their resources in social movements and policy change as key experts and stakeholders in their respective areas. Many nonprofits can easily tie their *mission* statements, which clearly describe the activities and purpose of the nonprofit, to the goals of related social movements. Social movement goals may also link closely to nonprofit *vision* statements, which are “descriptions of the world as it would exist if the organization were to succeed in achieving its grandest aspirations” (The Bridgespan Group, 2019). An individual nonprofit’s mission and specific activities play a significant part of what it takes to achieve its vision; however, intentional participation in larger social movements gives a nonprofit the opportunity to go beyond its mission and dive further into achieving its own vision.

For example, Food Shift, a nonprofit in Alameda, California that is “reducing the harmful impacts of wasted food and improving community health through the recovery, redistribution, and processing of surplus food [and] provides training and jobs to individuals with barriers to employment” (Food Shift, 2019). Consider how Food Shift could move into broader social change activities that advance its vision to “feed the hungry, create jobs, combat climate change, and cultivate more sustainable communities” (Food Shift, 2019). The organization could lobby for legislation related to slowing down climate change or address the root causes of homelessness in California that led to hunger and unemployment. Food Shift’s daily activities are valuable to the communities that the organization serves and certainly fulfill the elements of its vision statement, yet Food Shift also has the opportunity to branch into more system-level activities to affect even more change.

The Building Movement Project (2006) described the importance of vision statements and how they connect nonprofits to broader efforts for social justice:

In developing a vision for your work, you can challenge the prevailing assumptions about how the world operates and refer back to your learning to think more critically about the root causes of the problems your agency addresses. A vision reflects the values you hold and represents how you see the world. The vision is not just about your organization; it links you and your agency with countless others in moving toward a more just and sustainable world (p.

24).

Nonprofits are certainly not obligated to conduct activities outside of their mission statements; however, given their social justice orientations and existing intrinsic motivations to exact social change, nonprofits are already naturally positioned to engage in broader change that advances social change in line with their vision statements for an ideal and just world. Every nonprofit has the opportunity to take its platform and resources forward to engage in social movements and systemic change work that can be framed as an extension of its own values and services.

### **History of the U.S. Nonprofit Sector**

Many of the most deeply-rooted nonprofit organizations in the U.S. have origins that can be traced back to the Progressive Age between 1880 and 1920 when the country was undergoing rapid industrialization (Borstein & Davis, 2010, p. 6). Out of desperation to end oppressive slum and factory working conditions, “enlightened philanthropists began experimenting with ‘scientific charity,’ which aimed to transform the conditions that produced poverty” and resulted in the creation of many well-known organizations such as the YWCA, the Salvation Army, the Boy and Girl Scouts, and Goodwill Industries (Borstein & Davis, 2010, pp. 6-7). Many of these massive and aged nonprofits stand strong today in the United States as strong influencers of the nonprofit sector and shapers of modern society. Nonprofits have long been some of the most effective actors addressing social injustices, and the notion of “scientific charity” has led to sector-wide change that seeks to address the root causes of societal problems and injustices to begin with, rather than putting band-aids and short-term solutions on recurring problems.

On the backend of what was marketed as charity work during this time, many wealthy individuals and corporations began using the nonprofit structure as a way to step around taxes and redirect social and political movements that challenged corporate power (INCITE!, 2007, p. 4). The Rockefeller Foundation stands out as a prominent early example of a foundation that made a clear investment in quieting the 1913 Colorado miners strike against Colorado Fuel and Iron, which happened to be a business in which Rockefeller owned 40% of shares (INCITE!, 2007, p. 4).

In the modern day context of social movements in the U.S., INCITE! critiques what it refers to as the “nonprofit industrial complex” (NPIC), defined by Dylan Rodriguez as “a set of symbiotic relationships that link political and financial technologies of state and owning class control with surveillance over public political ideology, including and especially emergent progressive and leftist social movements” (INCITE! 2007, p. 8). This perspective challenges the NPIC and nonprofit sector as we know it, particularly

foundations, as an extension of the oppressive capitalist system that continues to give tax breaks to the wealthy, profit corporations, and feed workers in need of “relief” from those corporations back into the arms of foundations.

Many social services that were slashed by the U.S. government, particularly during the Reagan era, had to be replaced by the American people in the form of nonprofit service providers. It is estimated that “federal support to nonprofits outside the health sector (which benefited disproportionately from the rise in Medicaid and Medicare spending) fell by 27 percent from 1980 to 1984” (Soskis, 2017). Former President Reagan’s philosophy behind these cuts was to supposedly allow individual nonprofits to choose their own direction of services that would be more in line with the people’s needs, as opposed to the government overseeing the service provisions (Lenkowsky, 2004). With these government program cuts, Former President Reagan also communicated the intention to revitalize the nonprofit community and encourage citizens to participate and engage in changemaking and social good themselves through the nonprofit sector (Lenkowsky, 2004); however, the repercussions on the nonprofit sector itself cannot be ignored. Nonprofit organizations can, and do, service countless people each year in health care, legal assistance, education and other sectors of social service, but it is with great strain from a lack of government funding and support that many of these organizations struggle to meet the needs of their beneficiaries. The nonprofit sector thankfully stepped up to fill many of the gaps from Reagan’s significant cuts of government services in order to take care of American citizens, but the reality is that the needs of citizens are still not all met and the nonprofit sector is not sufficiently funded or supported to address all societal needs.

Despite this broken system, nonprofit service providers do not necessarily need to disappear. Instead, they “should also engage social justice organizing or must be accountable to social movements if they are to further, rather than impede, social justice” (INCITE! 2007, p. 11) by engaging in social change work that “challenges the root causes of the exploitation and violence” (INCITE! 2007, p. 129). It is not enough to simply conduct social service work that “addresses the needs of individuals reeling from the personal and devastating impact of institutional systems of exploitation and violence” (INCITE! 2007, p. 129). In order to fix systems of oppression, nonprofits can leverage their positions and privileges within the system itself to create change and advocate for legislation and policies that challenge the root causes of injustices and support the needs of their beneficiaries.

### **Nonprofit Advantages and Limitations for Social Movement Work**

The nonprofit sector has learned to creatively serve its target populations while maintaining a social change agenda that addresses systems of oppression. While limitations and oppressive structures are still intertwined with the sector, the nonprofit

form can be, should be, and is used in a way that can advance social good while simultaneously working to reshape society. Nonprofit organizations offer many advantages from their social and legal positioning that can be leveraged for the empowerment of the people, several of which are detailed in the following subsections.

**Legal Incorporation:** While any individual or legal entity can participate in social movements to a certain extent, nonprofit organizations have unique roles and their own personal advantages that can be played to a movement's benefit, and by extension, nonprofits' own missions and visions of change. On a very simple and concrete level, nonprofit organizations have a legal structure that is often utilized or pursued by movement and activist groups for legal recognition that supports movement legitimacy. The nonprofit structure offers organizations the opportunity to receive benefits that the movement demands, such as receiving funding or other demands that must be directed or given to a direct entity. Nonprofit incorporation also allows organizations to receive tax-exempt donations and increases the organization's chance of qualifying for grants (The Ohio State University, 2019). Cress (1997) conducted a study of social movement organizations (SMOs), generally defined as "groups of individuals banded together, either formally or informally, to pursue or resist social change" (Sommerfeldt & Yang, 2017, p. 830), who were working on homelessness issues in various communities around the U.S. The study assessed the decision-making processes that each SMO went through when considering whether to incorporate as a nonprofit or not. The study concluded that organizations face both internal and external drivers when considering nonprofit incorporation: internal drivers include the SMO's individual decision-making processes, belief systems and collective identity, and the role that movement professionals play in the organization's area of concern (Cress, 1997, p. 345). External drivers include an SMO's resource dependencies and the contexts of the broader multi-organizational field and institutional environments that SMOs navigate (Cress, 1997, p. 345).

The SMOs featured in Cress's study who chose to incorporate as nonprofit organizations did so for several reasons: to have the legal structure to "apply for financial resources to provide social services to the homeless population" (Cress, 1997, p. 350); to adopt organizational legitimacy (Cress, 1997, p. 350); to allow "for the SMO to receive new advantages won from the state as a result of their collective action" (Cress, 1997, p. 354), such as a new office space; or as a result of a sponsoring organization deciding to formalize its social movement efforts and 'maintain steady and consistent levels of activism'" (Cress, 1997, pp. 353-54).

Cress found that the examined SMOs who chose not adopt a nonprofit form did so for two overarching reasons: "either the homeless SMO never developed to the point where nonprofit adoption was considered, or nonprofit adoption was rejected because the perceived limitations on political activity were viewed as not worth the potential

benefits” (Cress, 1997, p. 347). For newly formed SMOs, meeting immediate needs for survival often takes precedence over deciding to take on a new legal form, and may not be easily feasible for organizations without defined leadership or member bases. This, however, is a notable issue given that “the resource benefits of nonprofit incorporation [are] most often mentioned as the motive for adoption [and] suggests that SMOs should incorporate earlier in their careers when issues of survival are more salient” (Cress, 1997, p. 348). Some of the SMOs simply declined to incorporate as a nonprofit organization because they “were unwilling to comply with the constraints on action, both real and imagined, that non-profit structuring entailed” (Cress, 1997, p. 348), which is a fair consideration given that “SMO activity becomes subject to laws written to regulate charity” (Cress, 1997, p. 356) and may change the way an organization is able to operate. Incorporating as a nonprofit may also present other disadvantages such as maintaining nonprofit status requirements and having to consult legal professionals in times of need (The Ohio State University, 2019). It is worthwhile to reflect on these structural limitations and potential dilemmas as nonprofits consider participating in a social movement.

**Connection to the Cause:** An obvious driver and advantage for nonprofits to participate in social movements is the already-existing dedication that they demonstrate for resolving societal needs (Building Movement Project, 2007, p. 3). The framework of this research is set to encourage nonprofits to move beyond their niche activities that fall under mission statements and to move into work that advances their vision statements and societal change in a broader way. Through each of their own mission statements and dedicated activities to serve a population or need, nonprofits are already helping to create a better world and improve the quality of life for their beneficiaries and need no further convincing that the advancement of their own visions for a better world is an important matter.

**Expertise & Established Networks:** In-depth knowledge of issues that social movements center on is a near-guaranteed characteristic of nonprofit organizations that work to address social injustice and societal needs. As a result of the personal connections and understanding of critical issues developed through nonprofit programming, nonprofits are not only passionate about their issue areas, but also knowledgeable and well-informed about the political, societal, environmental and social aspects of their focus areas that affect real lives. This unique expertise can be used by nonprofits to inform decision-making and shape realistic and appropriate goal-setting for social movements.

The value of the established networks that nonprofits bring to social justice work can also be leveraged to organize more people, entities, and resources into a movement. Many nonprofit organizations are already connected or partnered with other similar

nonprofits through program partnerships, coalitions, donor and funder relationships, and can leverage those relationships for increased collective resources and effort towards a movement and its cause. Credited again to nonprofits “substantial reach into low-income and other marginalized communities, especially with constituents who are left out of civic participation” (Building Movement Project, 2007, p. 3), organizations are better able to invite and include the voices and participation of those who are most impacted by social movements. This is a crucial piece to a social movement’s success and authenticity to advance the rights of those at the center of a movement’s message and goals.

**Funding:** Many nonprofit organizations, usually 501(c)(3) foundations, are capable or specifically designed to grant funds to other entities and organizations that conduct activities aligned with their own mission statements. Grantmaking organizations have historically played key supportive roles in the success or demise of social movements. Kohl-Arenas, author of “The Self-Help Myth,” discussed historical turning points influenced by philanthropic entities in the context of the California farmworker movement and the significant role that philanthropy had in either driving forward or co-opting the efforts of both movements. The boundaries of how far and to which activities private foundations are willing to support can both enable and heavily limit an SMO’s ability to continue its movement actions. Kohl-Arenas found that “private foundations who have expressed interest in investment in social movements have hard and fast lines in terms of how far they will go to support social change” (2019). In the case of the California farmworker movement, The Rosenberg Foundation’s early support helped build leadership in the growing movement, but the foundation refused to “support strikes, boycotts, picket lines, unionization, or anything that had to do with confronting the economic structures of agriculture, and similar findings” (2019). Other foundations at the time “insisted on only funding service center part of the work and not leadership development or organizing” (Kohl-Arenas, 2019).

This selective funding is problematic because it not only inhibits SMOs from continuing their work through the financial and organizational support of another entity, but it also can have a “capture” effect on the movement as SMOs shift their movement directions in order to appease funders and supporters. Ming Francis uncovered the truthful relationship between the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Garland Fund, one of the organization’s most prominent funders. The NAACP is often touted for its success in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case in 1954 that unraveled segregation in U.S. schools (NAACP, 2019), but in reality, education was never a major priority for the NAACP until the Garland Fund made it so (Ming Francis, 2019). Ming Francis identified the lesser-known movement capture, “the process by which private funders leverage their financial resources to apply pressure and influence the decision-making process of civil rights organizations” (2019, p. 278), that caused the

NAACP to shift its focus from anti-lynching and mob violence against black people to educational justice.

The funding of SMOs is a large part of what makes movements successful and is one of the biggest ways that a nonprofit organization can propel social change; however, funding practices should be conducted in a conscious way that allows for those most affected by the movement to truly dictate what the movement pursues and by what methods, rather than used as a manipulative pressure to change movement tactics and goals. Pastor and Ortiz recommended that foundations take on the role of a supporter, rather than a partner, when deciding to fund SMOs because “foundations can help jumpstart or maintain efforts through resources, but the actual movement and credit needs to come from and for those organizations doing the footwork” (2009, p. 44). Foundations should also be prepared to confront power and support their grantees in challenging the opposition and during times of criticism, in addition to committing to the movement for the long haul rather than jumping in on trendy “fad” movements in moments of urgency (Pastor & Ortiz, 2009, pp. 45-46).

***Advocacy & Civic Engagement:*** One of the most prominent forms of social movement participation that a nonprofit organization can take on is advocacy for nonpartisan political changes and policies that pertain to its mission and primary organizational focus. In general, nonprofits would do well to stay actively informed on the laws and policies in place or pending change that impacts them and their beneficiaries. Nonprofits also stand to benefit from encouraging their stakeholders to be informed about relevant issues and actively engage in the civic space. Nonprofits may also conduct “nonpartisan efforts to encourage voting and other participation in federal, state, county, and city policy making” to generate participation in civic society amongst stakeholder groups in general, or pertaining to a specific policy that relates to the nonprofits’ issue areas and target populations (Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, 2019). Advocacy “includes a large number of activities, from grassroots organizing, public education, policy research, lobbying, position papers or statements on issues, voter registration, coalition participation or building... election activities...litigation and boycotts, along with direct action (disruptive behavior)” (Mason, 2018).

***Lobbying:*** As an activity that falls under the umbrella of advocacy, lobbying differs in that it is composed of activities that directly attempt to influence legislators regarding certain policy decisions, rather than simply stopping at endorsing a nonpartisan policy or releasing a position statement to stakeholders. The Minnesota Council of Nonprofits strongly advises nonprofits to influence “public decision-making [as] a critical and legal means for nonprofit organizations to accomplish their missions” (2019). Given the expertise of nonprofits and their beneficiaries in issue areas are frequently debated by policymakers, open communication between nonprofits and



policymakers is advantageous to help shape “well-informed policies and their effective implementation” (Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, 2019). According to Schadler, lobbying consists of the following activities:

- drafting legislation;
- persuading legislators to introduce legislation;
- circulating lobbying materials to assist in the passage or defeat of a bill;
- engaging members and the general public by letter, phone, or the mass media to encourage their legislators to support or oppose legislation; and
- supporting or opposing referenda, initiatives, and other public ballot measures (2012, pp. 11-12).

In the U.S., nonprofit 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organizations are limited in the amount of lobbying that they may partake in, but not completely restricted. By default, nonprofit organizations must follow the substantial part test, which dictates that “no substantial part of a charity’s activities... be carrying on propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation” (Alliance for Justice, 2011, p. 4). This definition is vague and the exact limitations vary from organization to organization. The lack of clarity on how to measure permitted lobbying activities has ultimately caused many nonprofits to strictly limit and even completely avoid lobbying activities to dodge the risk of losing their tax-exempt status.

The lesser-known option for determining an organization’s exact lobbying limitations is the 501(h) election that nonprofits may opt in for. Nonprofit organizations may self-check their unique lobbying limitations through the substantial part test and expenditure test by submitting IRS Form 5768 that determines how much time and resources an individual nonprofit can invest in lobbying (IRS, 2019). It is important to note that the 501(h) election may not be the best fit for every nonprofit and is inaccessible to private foundations, churches, and integrated auxiliaries of churches (Council of Nonprofits, 2019). According to the IRS (2019), nonprofit organizations that do submit Form 5768 and thereby take the 501(h) election are permitted to lobby to the extent of the following limitations:

- 20% of the first \$500,000 of exempt purpose expenditures, plus
- 15% of the next \$500,000 of exempt purpose expenditures, plus
- 10% of the next \$500,000 of exempt purpose expenditures, plus
- 5% of the remaining exempt purpose expenditures up to a total cap of \$1 million (IRS, 2019).

501(c)(4) nonprofits stand out as an exception to these lobbying restrictions. These organizations have access to unlimited lobbying restrictions, so long as the lobbying

activities pertain to the organization's primary exempt purposes of the organization (Schadler, 2012, p. 11). Unlike 501(c)(3) nonprofits, 501(c)(4)s are able to partake in "some partisan political campaign activities in accordance with federal and state campaign finance laws, provided that its political activities do not become its primary activity" (Schadler, 2012, p. 11). Many 501(c)(3) nonprofits or other entities opt to create their own partner 501(c)(4) organizations in order to access these lobbying privileges while still pursuing the parent organization's primary mission.

### **The Power of Coalitions**

Systemic change is rarely, if ever, the product of one sole individual or organization. The best organized and more "mature social movements usually include multiple organizations" (Snow, Soule & Kriesi, 2016, p. 190) and branch out to include organizations, entities, and individuals from all sectors and structure types. Social movements that are supported by diverse organizations and entities are more likely to succeed, given the variety of abilities, specializations, and resources that each entity can bring to the table (Snow, Soule & Kriesi, 2016, p. 190). The most basic argument and benefit for coalition formation is that "organizations are more powerful than individuals" (Snow, Soule & Kriesi, 2016, p. 136), leading individual entities to generate power in combining their forces and resources both *as* organizations and *with* other organizations. The coalition theory of change is rooted in the belief "that policy change happens through coordinated activity among individuals and organizations outside of government with the same core policy beliefs" (Stachowiak, 2013, p. 9) and usually engage in multiple pathways for action, including:

- influencing like-minded decision makers to make policy changes;
- changing incumbents in various positions of power;
- affecting public opinion via mass media;
- altering decision maker behavior through demonstrations or boycotts; or
- changing perceptions about policies through research and information exchange (Stachowiak, 2013, p. 9).

Research has demonstrated the importance of strong coalition presences that have been keystones of social movement successes, or a direct reason for movement failures such as in the neo-liberal reform movements in Latin America (Almeida, 2010) and movements fighting against privatized hospitals in the U.S. (Gelb & Shogan, 2005). On a more local scale, strong coalition formation and coordinated efforts have also been recognized in policy changes, such as California coalitions that pushed for policy changes regarding the Affordable Care Act and health care decisionmaking in the state (Eaton & Weir, 2013, p. 2). Coalitions offer organizations and SMOs the opportunity to pool their resources and efforts into a common cause with coordinated activities for bigger and

broader change (Snow, Soule & Kriesi, 2016; Van Dyke & Amos, 2017). They serve as a central meeting space to coordinate efforts, share information amongst member organizations, and ultimately magnify individual voices with a larger, more powerful, and collective one.

### **Setting the Foundations for Successful Coalitions**

The dire necessity of strong coalition formation and mobilization in social movements has prompted scholars, sociologists and SMOs themselves to research the traits and practices that help construct the strongest coalitions. Working together with others for peaceful collaboration sounds great from almost any angle, but successful coalition work requires strong intention-setting and problem-solving skills from all partners. The following section of this literature review describes a list of major themes that have emerged out of social movement literature of best practices for coalitions.

***Integrating the Voices of the Marginalized:*** First and foremost, social movement coalitions must thoroughly integrate the voices of those who are most impacted by the issue at hand. The Building Movement Project suggests to nonprofit organizations, who “often see constituents as ‘clients’ or people who come to access services,” to shift into a new approach with constituent engagement that goes “beyond the service delivery process [and] helps organizations to learn about common barriers that they face such as a non-responsive landlord, as well as problems navigating and accessing systems that are designed to help them” (2015, p. 6). This also enables SMOs to work “with people rather than for people” (Building Movement Project, 2015, p. 6), enabling and empowering a social justice-oriented model that is rooted in advancing the rights of those impacted by the movement. In the most simple and unapologetic wording of Rabinowitz: “It makes no sense, and is patently unfair, to make decisions that affect people's lives without including them in the process” (2018).

***Clarity of Coalition Intentions:*** When SMOs and individuals come together to collaborate for a common cause, that common cause must be clearly defined and agreed upon by all coalition members (Cohen, Baer & Satterwhite, 2002, p. 7). According to Schmitz, “it is important to take the time up front to define the problem and target population, identify and develop effective backbone staff, and create a strong common agenda using an inclusive process” (2019, p. 1). Coalitions as a whole should have a shared vision of what they are trying to achieve or change together (Pastor & Ortiz, 2009) that build cohesion amongst stakeholders regarding their goals for desired change and the coalition’s value proposition that “clearly articulate[s] why they are the right vehicle” (Raynor, 2011, pp. 17-18). At the same time, coalition members also need to come to the table with their intentions in mind of why precisely they are choosing to participate in the coalition. Together, coalitions must “create

options that mutually satisfy the leader organization’s objectives as well as the goals of other coalition members, to propose mutually productive activities, and to structure both objectives and activities in such a way that the other coalition members feel included in the decision making process” (Cohen, Baer & Satterwhite, 2002, p. 11).

**Clear Governance & Delegation of Duties:** Alongside the need for a clear coalition direction and mission is the need for defined governance and sharing of tasks and duties amongst coalition members (Pastor & Ortiz, 2009). Coalitions “should also include ways to ensure accountability and rules that allow for changing the alliance agreement or ending it” (Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, 2019) in order to ensure member responsibility over delegated tasks and create a structure for the coalition. Some coalitions choose to elect officers or create a steering committee as guiding leaders for the partners (Rabinowitz, 2018). Leadership structures within coalitions “keep the coalition moving forward, resolve conflict, ensure trust and accountability from members, and keep a coalition focused on its vision” (Raynor, 2011, p. 19).

**Long-Term Commitment:** By definition, social movements must endure beyond quick demonstrations or protests and pass into activities of sustained efforts towards a particular mission. SMOs and coalitions that want to see their target changes achieved must commit to the cause for the long run, despite challenges that are likely to arise throughout the social movement’s lifecycle (Pastor & Ortiz, 2009; Raynor, 2011). Pastor and Ortiz made a distinction between movements and coalitions, stating that “one might think of coalitions as having a short shelf life, one dictated by the timing of a policy decision or an electoral cycle. Movements, however, are able to pivot from issue to issue, constantly referring back to a worldview and an agenda” (Pastor & Ortiz, 2009, p. 22). Staggenborg (2015) challenged this separation between coalitions and movements:

Coalitions are often formed in response to opportunities and threats, but they have to build on existing mobilizing structures—organizations, networks, etc.—in the movement community. Movement activists may create coalitions out of an explicit desire to build the movement, sometimes by generating a victory. Some coalitions form around particular events for limited time periods, but they create visibility for the movement, strengthen networks and bonds of trust, and draw new activists into participation. Longer-term coalitions may direct campaigns, which are critical to movement goals but sometimes difficult to launch without a coalition. Even when a campaign fails to achieve its goals, it may help to build the movement.

Although individual coalitions may not endure for the entire existence of a social movement, they are a key part of what makes a social movement successful and require

long-term thinking and commitment. When setting the foundations of a coalition, leaders should dictate how long the coalition is intended to last for and what purpose it serves (Cohen, Baer & Satterwhite, 2002, p. 16).

***Engaging and Stretching Across Multiple Constituencies:*** One of the most desirable benefits of participating in a coalition is the ability to network with other like-minded organizations in a given movement or sector to share information, create partnerships and find or share new clients between organizations. “Bringing together groups and individuals from many sectors of the community can create alliances where there was little contact before” and ensure that organizations are not duplicating each other’s efforts in the same populations or spaces (Rabinowitz, 2018). Many organizations and nonprofits involved in coalitions often serve the same populations or demographics of people but provide support and services in different ways. For example, an organization that provides job support to refugees may be able to connect their clients to another organization that provides legal support or English language learning classes. In other cases, coalitions may involve organizations that work with differing stakeholder groups, such as organizations that focus on housing equality and justice with populations of various races, language abilities, or geographical locations. Entities from the for-profit and public sector are also commonly partnered with to create cross-sector efforts and leverage diverse connections and resources.

Based on the findings from this literature review, the following research questions were developed to guide the remaining research and recommendations in this document:

- What is the nonprofit sector’s unique role in participating in social movements?
- What advantages and strengths does the coalition platform provide for its members and movement?
- What general best practices can be applied for social movement success regarding nonprofit involvement in coalitions?

### **Section 3: Methods and Approaches**

This project utilizes a mixed-methods research approach of both primary and secondary data resources. Secondary resources used in the literature review of this project were retrieved online from the Gleeson Library’s online database through the University of San Francisco, Google Scholar, various nonprofit and social impact organization websites, and other online links retrieved through search engines Google and Ecosia.

Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews of six individuals from the nonprofit sector with expertise in coalition-building and social movements. Given

the unique positions, legal structures and issue areas of the various organizations and coalitions associated with each expert interviewee, interview questions were adjusted to target organization-specific situations, focus areas and organizational tactics and strategies. The guiding interview questions and interviewee biographies can be found in Appendix A.

The expert interviews were conducted either in-person, over the phone, or through Zoom video conferencing. The following six individuals were interviewed, intentionally selected based on their organizations of employment or involvement and coalition-related activities that allowed the researcher to incorporate diverse perspectives and opinions into this project:

- Sangeeta Chowdhry: Senior Director of Economic Justice of Global Fund for Women
- Cristy Dieterich: Refugee Health Coordinator for San Francisco, San Mateo and Marin Counties, Health Educator of the San Francisco Department of Health; Coordinator of the San Francisco Coalition of Asylee, Refugee and Immigrant Services (SF-CAIRS)
- Marissa Graciosa: Former Senior Advisor of the Building Movement Project
- Sean Kirkpatrick: Coordinator of the East Bay Refugee and Immigrant Forum (EBRIF)
- Kimi Lee: Executive Director of Bay Rising
- Landon Williams: Senior Director of Place of The San Francisco Foundation

This research spans several movement issue areas, including immigration, racial justice, women's rights, housing, and economic development. While it would have been possible to focus on one particular social movement topic, this research included several movement perspectives for the purpose of creating recommendations that nonprofits operating in various issue areas can utilize in their own coalition activities and contributions.

Major themes and recommendations from the interviewees were organized and summarized in Section 4 of this document and used, in combination with information found through the literature review, to formulate best practices in the recommendations portion of this research.

## Section 4. Hindsight and Wisdom from the Experts

As mentioned above, the semi-structured questions posed to each interviewee varied based on the interviewee's organization and professional role. Despite organizational differences that prompted unique questions for each interviewee, all participants were asked questions that fell into two major categories: the specific social movement and coalition work of the interviewee's affiliated organization, and the interviewee's perceptions of the nonprofit role in social movements and coalitions. The purpose of the interviews was to gain a well-rounded understanding from coalition and nonprofit experts of how various organizations engage in social change through coalition work and of what best practices exist for coalition-building. These findings were used to further understand how nonprofits can use or work around their characteristics that either aid or inhibit them from participating in social change on a broader level.

### The Nonprofit Sector's Role

The unique structure and positioning of the nonprofit sector gives it both a leg up and a fine line to dance around in terms of what it can do in the social movement arena. Across the board, all of the interviewees agreed that nonprofits are, by default, positioned closely to their beneficiary populations that are typically the impacted marginalized communities of related social movements. Nonprofit organizations often have the advantage of being what Marissa Graciosa described as "closest to the pain," essentially meaning that nonprofits work on the ground with the people impacted by social movements and know the issue areas better than many (personal communication, June 18, 2019). Sangeeta Chowdhry explained how Global Fund For Women uses its foundation platform and proximity to women and women's organizations around the world to elevate their personal stories and feminist movement work that is happening away from the spotlight (personal communication, July 18, 2019).

Graciosa explained that nonprofits are also often the entities that push the public and private sectors to rise to a higher standard of serving people instead of their own profits, therefore the path into advocacy and social movement work is natural for many nonprofit organizations. Referencing *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex* by INCITE! (2007), also cited in the literature review portion of this document, Kimi Lee pushed against this argument because of the historical prompts for the nonprofit sector's birth that was intended to "quell social unrest," rather than fight the systems that created societal problems in the first place (personal communication, July 18, 2019). Both Graciosa and Lee agreed, however, that nonprofits can structurally identify where many social issues come from and therefore

propose effective solutions that address root causes, which the other sectors are often not intrinsically motivated to study or advocate for.

The legal structure of nonprofit organizations does offer some advantages to social movements. One of the biggest benefits of working with nonprofit organizations, according to Lee, is that they are allowed to accept grants and donation money that other entities do not have access to (personal communication, July 18, 2019). Chowdhry also cited Global Fund For Women's legal status as a 501(c)(3) foundation as a strength to the women's movement, as the organization is able to both receive donations and explicitly direct its funds to women-led organizations around the world doing work in line with the Global Fund For Women's beliefs (personal communication, July 18, 2019).

The downside to being funded by external entities is that many nonprofits can begin to steer away from their mission statements, otherwise known as slipping into mission drift, or become limited in their activities because of who their funders are and what those funders require of their fund recipients. Particularly for nonprofits that are funded even partially by government entities, they become restricted in their ability to speak out against legislation in order to preserve their funding and donor relationships. Some organizations such as Oakland Rising, a nonprofit that "educates and mobilizes voters in the flatlands to speak up for and take charge of the issues impacting our lives" (Oakland Rising, 2019), explicitly decide to reject government contracts for this reason. From the refugee and immigrant nonprofit community, Sean Kirkpatrick remarked a tendency for some government-funded nonprofits to have "a lack of critical awareness" about their place in a neoliberal system that does not always work on behalf of the people it serves, which can intrinsically inhibit many organizations to push for systemic change that would benefit their own beneficiary populations (personal communication, July 5, 2019).

Cristy Dieterich, the SF-CAIRS Coordinator and sole coalition facilitator, is in a position that clearly highlights the issue of government-funded advocacy conflicts. She is a direct employee of the City of San Francisco and is therefore completely unable to prompt or interact with any sort of lobbying or advocacy work with the very coalition of refugee and immigrant organizations that she leads. The member organizations of SF-CAIRS may legally organize themselves, but Dieterich herself is not able to facilitate or participate in the actions, which is a crippling limitation for the success of the coalition (Dieterich, personal communication, July 5, 2019). Even when not funded by government entities, nonprofits are already heavily restricted in their ability to lobby and advocate for relevant legislation. One way that Bay Rising has worked around these legal boundaries is through the creation of Bay Resistance, a 501(c)(4) organization that has unlimited lobbying privileges and allows its coalition members to run lobbying and advocacy



activities under its name. While acknowledging the important role of nonprofits in social change work and continuing to facilitate the Bay Rising coalition that is exclusively composed of nonprofit entities, Lee believes that “coalitions that are not nonprofits are actually, in terms of political power...where you will build political power” because of the flexibility and capacity of organizations outside of the nonprofit sector to endorse candidates and lobby without limitations (personal communication, July 5, 2019).

Aside from funding and legal restrictions, nonprofits vary drastically in their individual capacities to get involved in advocacy and coalitions for broader social change. Kirkpatrick and Dieterich, both leaders of refugee- and immigrant-oriented coalitions in the Bay Area, acknowledged that nonprofits in their sector are incredibly skilled and specialized in direct service provisions, such as ESL tutoring or health care services, but are not necessarily prepared, skilled, or willing to engage in coalition work. Some organizations are better suited for advocacy work than others, generally based on their organizational structure, mission, budgets, and staff capacity (personal communications, July 5, 2019). Financial support of the refugee and immigrant sector is dwindling as of recently, largely due to the United States’ current political climate and defunding of immigration-related nonprofits; therefore, the sector as a whole is generally financially strapped and already operating at full capacity. As Kirkpatrick affirmed, “advocacy takes a lot of dedicated attention from staff,” and that commitment is not something that every nonprofit can afford to make (personal communication, July 5, 2019). The additional stress of engaging in advocacy work turns out to be a driver for some smaller organizations, in Kirkpatrick’s experience, to turn to coalitions for partnerships and shared social movement efforts where they can contribute, rather than bearing the weight of initiating social movement activities individually.

## **Coalition Powers**

### **Unity Amongst Diverse Stakeholders**

Organizations from all sectors of the economy play some sort of role in any given social issue, ranging anywhere from causing an issue to solving it. The beautiful thing about coalitions is that they bring together stakeholders of a given social issue to collectively resolve it through shared resources, networks, and coordinated efforts. Government officials have political voting and decision-making power, nonprofits specialize in their own unique services, and private businesses can offer market-driven solutions. Chowdhry considers collaboration to be a key feature of a movement. Movement actors belong to a network, participate in alliances and partnerships, and “work together on a common political agenda” with coordinated strategies (Chowdhry, personal communication, July 18, 2019). Beyond the benefits of collaborative efforts towards a

shared mission, Lee believes intersectoral collaboration an absolute necessity for social change. Nonprofits can do a lot with outreach, education and some limited lobbying activities for a cause, and “we need change that’s happening from the inside, but we also need the outside pressure to happen” from other sectors in order to truly change the systems that oppress populations in the first place (Lee, personal communication, July 18, 2019).

Kirkpatrick emphasized EBRIF’s intentional efforts to keep “public officials on board so they are constantly aware of the community’s changing needs and statuses, rather than going back and forth trying to update them separately” (personal communication, July 5, 2019). Integrating government representatives from Alameda and Contra Costa counties, EBRIF’s two main geographical areas of focus, keeps the local government involved in EBRIF’s work and provides the coalition with positive connections to government officials that can advocate for their work at decision-making tables. The practice of diversifying the types of member organizations and entities in a coalition unquestionably brings a beneficial range of opinions and experiences to the community. It also allows coalitions to network with organizations outside of their own sectors or subsectors of work, to build relationships with stakeholders that can advocate for the coalition, and to create opportunities for collaboration across sectors that may not have been recognized or connected otherwise.

Landon Williams also spoke to the criticality of integrating diverse voices into social change work, even for foundations that act as facilitators and backend supporters such as the San Francisco Foundation. Under the San Francisco Foundation’s transition of CEOs in 2014, the organization underwent a great learning and impact evaluation process to receive feedback from its grantees, stakeholders and local experts about its program efficiency. According to Williams, the foundation “invited folks from academia, subject matter experts, other foundations, nonprofits, and some community folks and local government to come in and spend two days critiquing” each of its programs and initiatives to help strengthen its partnerships and programs to better fit true community needs (Williams, personal communication, July 8, 2019). As a former member of the Black Panther Party, Williams also spoke to the party’s Rainbow Coalition that brought together several racial groups in the Chicago area, including the Young Patriots, the Young Lords, the Blackstone Rangers, and the Black P. Stones. These groups of people were previously operating in silos, largely divided by generations of misunderstanding and conflict, but were effectively brought together under the agenda of economic justice and equality by Fred Hampton of the Black Panther Party. Together, the groups were able to overcome differences and pool their power and resources towards the same goals that simultaneously advanced all of their civil rights.

These efforts of EBRIF, the San Francisco Foundation and the Black Panther Party serve as excellent demonstrations of what people and organizations from diverse backgrounds can achieve and learn when they come together. It is human nature to stick to those who are most similar to oneself, but the collective benefits that result from unity across diverse stakeholders brings people from all corners of society together for broad system changes.

### **Coordination of Services and Activities**

Joining together in partnership is the first and most obvious step to bringing together an effective coalition, but the activities of that coalition and its individual members should also be synced to optimize various efforts working towards the overarching shared goal. Members of a coalition and nonprofits in general are specialists in their own sectors and provision of services. Kirkpatrick noted that while most nonprofits do an excellent job at direct services and the activities that correlate with their mission statements, they do not necessarily serve their client populations in every way that a whole person might need (personal communication, July 5, 2019). For example, an organization that offers a domestic violence hotline does not necessarily serve its client population in its potential other needs, such as finding safe housing or working with Child Protective Services. Collaboration with organizations that serve the same population in different ways allows organizations to collectively ensure the best results and well-rounded support for their beneficiary communities, ultimately advancing each organization's mission and vision of a better world for the community.

In the economic decline of 2006, the San Francisco Foundation played a large role in bringing together organizations from all over the Bay Area to collaborate on the housing and job crisis happening in the region. Williams organized over 60 nonprofit organizations in the Bay Area that had historically operated in silos, ranging anywhere from building affordable housing to influencing policy to supporting the workforce (L. Williams, personal communication, July 8, 2019). The San Francisco Foundation provided the funding and physical meeting space for this new coalition to learn about each other and how they could support one another's work in the same fight. Although the members of the coalition conducted different activities on a day-to-day basis, each organization's work in housing or employment was interconnected and relied on one another's success for its own.

In order to coordinate services, events and activities in this way, knowledge-sharing and networking has emerged as one of the most common coalition practices for members to get to know one another and stay updated on what else is happening in the community and movement. All six of the interviewees reported knowledge-sharing and networking

to be some of the most important and valuable activities that coalitions can facilitate. In the EBRIF and SF-CAIRS coalitions of the Bay Area, organizations are able to network with other entities providing different services to the refugee and migrant community and redirect their own clients to the appropriate agency for the support that they need. This practice also ensures that multiple entities are not duplicating efforts and programs with the same target communities.

Lee's coalition, Bay Rising, also coordinates events and planned actions together to stay updated on what is happening in the regional movement, ensure that every activity has enough people in attendance, the right people in attendance, and any other type of support that members might need to succeed on behalf of the coalition. Going a step beyond this event-by-event type of support, Bay Rising also hosts trainings and workshops to further develop the skills of their members and leaders, in addition to regranting funds to its members to alleviate the stress of fundraising from the members' already overwhelming list of responsibilities. In any coalition, the goal should be to funnel together efforts of prospective and current coalition members that work towards similar or related goals in order to minimize duplication of activities, relieve the burden of work from many entities to one shared effort, and reduce many individual voices to one condensed and well-backed movement voice.

### **Additional Coalition Best Practices**

Just as any nonprofit should do on its own, coalitions too need to maintain a specific focus and intention for existing. Organizations should always remember their purpose for collaboration and how they will achieve that purpose together. Graciosa, Dieterich, and Lee (2019) each pinpointed the failure to organize with a clear and agreed-upon mission and purpose as a key indicator that leads to coalition failure. Clear goals and defined activities that all members are on board keep coalition members focused and intentional in the collective work. Kirkpatrick expressed the challenges of maintaining a focused coalition of organizations that have very different focuses on a day-to-day basis. In order to bring benefit to members that operate in legal services, cultural activities, education, housing, and any other activity or interest area, Kirkpatrick recommends that coalitions incorporate their members in its strategic planning processes and find specific ways to involve every organization in its regular meetings (personal communication, July 5, 2019).

According to Graciosa, individual organizations that cannot define exactly why they are participating in a coalition are more likely to become caught up in the politics, drama and fine details of coalition navigation, rather than advancing the ultimate shared goal of the coalition (personal communication, June 18, 2019). Clarity of self-interest is

something that organizations must proactively define in order to know what they expect to give and receive in a coalition relationship. Kirkpatrick encourages prospective coalition members to frame their approach from the standpoint of “what is missing from my work that I can get out of this coalition?” and to then “volunteer to be leaderly” once they become a part of the coalition (personal communication, July 5, 2019). Coalitions are not usually designed to facilitate on-the-ground services that its members deliver, although there are exceptions, but to create a space of shared values, coordinated efforts and generate power in numbers amongst the coalition members. Member organizations must be willing to actively participate and drive the functionality of the coalition in order for it to bring benefit to the collective and fulfill its purpose, while consistently maintaining a clear collective vision and reason for participating.

As a closing note to the interviews, the experts were asked to give a final word of advice to nonprofits seeking to become involved in coalitions for broad social change. The importance of utilizing existing tools, resources and self-assessment exercises was emphasized by three interviewees. Exercising organizational power through coalitions and collaboratives is not a new concept in the social movement world, and organizations can easily benefit from studying the advice and toolkits that are often published and accessible online. In a similar vein, coalitions and their leaders need to be open to evaluation and feedback from their constituents, listen to the people who are doing the work on the ground and know the realities of the issue area, and as Kirkpatrick phrased it, “be open to blowing your structure up and recreating it from scratch if it’s not working” (personal communication, July 5, 2019).

Finally, Graciosa and Lee advised organizations and coalition to genuinely take the time to build the agreed-upon foundations of a coalition and develop interpersonal and interorganizational relationships. The ability to successfully navigate relationships is ultimately what will guide nonprofits to success in coalition formation, along with well-developed trust amongst stakeholders that supports the coalition in times of disagreement and conflict management.

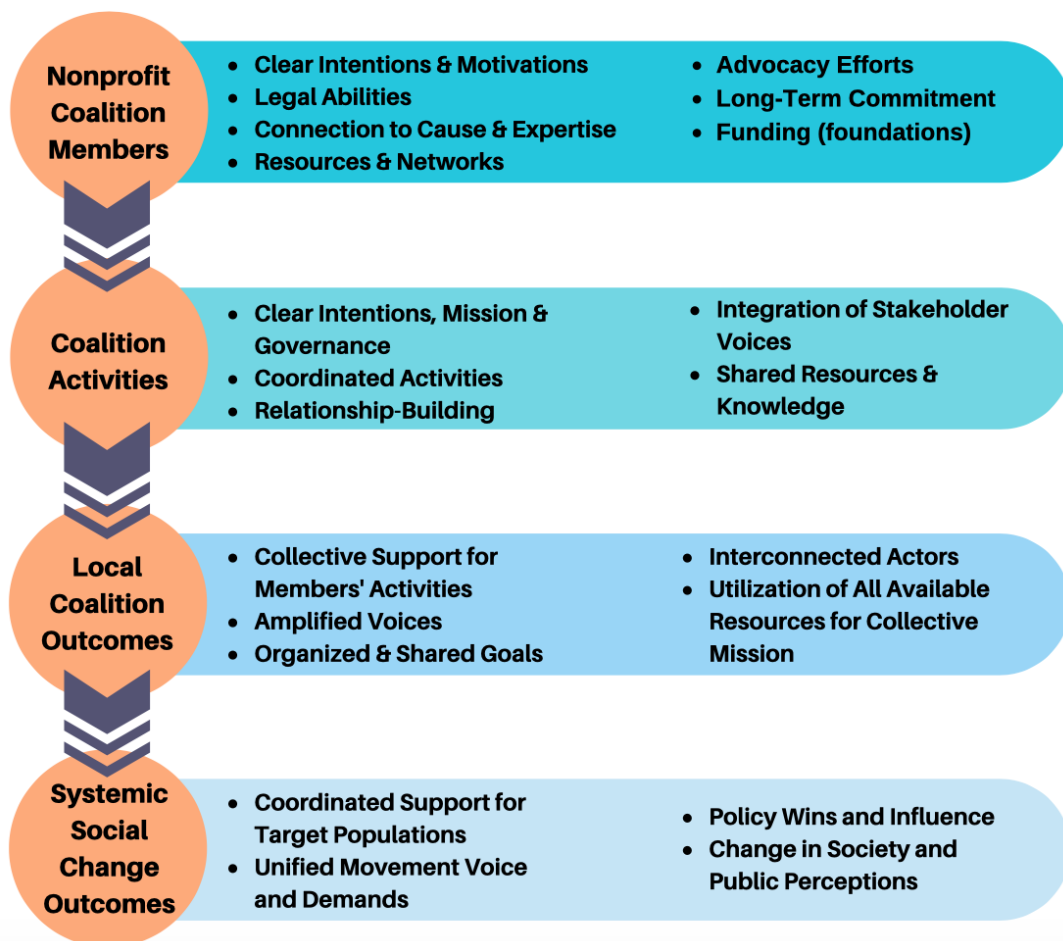
## **Section 5: Implications, Limitations and Recommendations**

### **Implications**

The path to effective social change on a systemic level starts from a grassroots effort on the end of individuals, nonprofits and other SMOs, but is heavily accelerated and amplified when coordinated with other movement actors in the coalition form. Figure 1 offers a model of the pathway to shift social movement power from one individual nonprofit to a coalition, followed by outcomes and benefits on a local coalition level and

systemic level that can be generally expected when nonprofits and coalitions apply the best practices.

**Figure 1: Nonprofit Pathway to Successful Coalitions and Systemic Social Change**



Source: Author's creation, 2019

As identified through the literature review and expert interviewees' advice, nonprofit organizations must prepare themselves to collaborate and have clear intentions and motivations for participation. This allows nonprofits, as coalition members, to enter a coalition knowing what they intend to bring to the table and what they seek to receive from the collective activities, which in turn supports the coalition as a whole in deciding what its mission and purpose for existing is. Nonprofit organizations offer many strengths, resources and abilities that can be leveraged in social movement coalitions, including abilities based on legal organizational status, an existing connection to the cause, expertise, networks and other resources, and the ability to engage in advocacy

efforts. Foundations can also play a role in supporting the capacities of existing SMOs and coalitions. If the coalition is designed to exist for a long-term movement, long-term commitment is key for building power over time and maintaining movement momentum.

Likewise, coalitions themselves must clarify their intentions, purpose, and governance structures to set clear expectations of what the coalition will do, and how. Coalitions offer the opportunity for organizations and individuals to collaborate, coordinate activities aimed towards the same goals, network and build relationships, and share their resources and knowledge. Individuals are stronger together when their voices are unified and advocating for the same message of change, and the coordination of the numerous voices and activities of a movement will lead to bigger impact and recognition. On a systemic level, these coordinated practices will allow organizations to better service their beneficiary populations, create a stronger branding and movement presence, strategically win on legislation cases, and eventually influence societal and systemic perceptions and regulations regarding the movement issue.

### **Limitations**

Coalition work and social movement organizing in the nonprofit context is a deep and wide subject area that can always be studied from new angles, particularly given the fast-paced changes that can happen in social movements and political environments. While this research was intentional about spanning across movement issue areas, future researchers may opt to study a single movement area, such as environmental or racial justice, in order to focus on the unique needs and abilities of specific movements and communities.

This research intentionally did not have a quantitative component because it is not an assessment of existing or past movements or organizations. It is a collection of best practices and advice for nonprofits to learn to collaborate productively with other SMOs operating in the same sphere of change. An opportunity for future research exists here to quantitatively examine case studies of existing and past social movements and coalitions for movement results and previous experiences in coalition navigation.

On a geographic level, six out of the seven interviewees work in organizations based in the Bay Area of California, including but not limited to San Francisco, Oakland, and Alameda. One of the interviewees is based in Chicago and operates their nonprofit programs in New York. While the findings from this research are generally applicable to all coalitions and movements regardless of location, future research may explore how different areas and communities in the U.S. and other countries can best leverage their nonprofits and coalition structures for systemic change that makes sense locally.

## Recommendations

### For Nonprofits:

- *Identify your organization's intentions* for engaging in coalitions for broader social change and what it seeks from the partnership. Know what your organization can contribute and receive from participating in a coalition, and how your participation advances your own mission and social change work. Be prepared to engage and collaborate actively in the coalition to ensure that it serves its purpose for your organization and the coalition as a whole.
- *Commit for the long run.* Systemic change doesn't happen overnight, or in some cases, even over the course of many years of organized movement action. Movements require dedicated actors who are prepared to engage in sustained efforts over time. The longevity of a coalition varies based on the coalition's reason for existence and the type of work that it focuses on; however, coalitions generally require strategic planning and a significant amount of foundational set up before even beginning to officially operate
- *A note to foundations:* Fund consciously and in a way that empowers movement actors to preserve autonomy over their activities and their movement. Listen to the people living and working on the ground and provide the type of support that they need to make their movement win.

### For Coalitions:

- *Clarify the coalition's shared mission, dedicated activities, and governance structure.* If coalition members are not sure what the coalition is trying to achieve, or if there is disagreement amongst members about what the coalition's purpose is or should be, they are less likely to stay committed and coalition activities and communications will become disorganized. All coalition members must have a shared agreement of the purpose and activities of the coalition, in addition to the expectations and contributions that are asked of each member.
- *Build relationships and network* amongst coalition members and outside of the coalition to build trust, create opportunities for knowledge-sharing, and forge partnerships that advance the coalition's mission.
- *Coordinate activities and movement actions* with the coalition's members. This will eliminate duplicate efforts and pool more power and resources into single efforts, rather than having the same type of action or service implemented by numerous actors. Coalitions should also support the efforts of coalition members as an extension of your own shared mission in the coalition through encouraging event attendance, offering support and resources in activity planning and



execution, and connecting members with other people or organizations who could support them too.

- *Integrate stakeholder voices in decision-making.* Every organization and coalition member bring their own expertise and perspectives on the shared coalition mission, while also coming to the table with their own expectations and hopes for what the coalition will provide. In order for a coalition to best serve its members and beneficiary communities, stakeholder input is key in decision-making and strategic planning to incorporate those perspectives and needs.

## Section 6: Conclusions

The nonprofit practice of engaging in social movement activities or participating in coalitions is nothing close to a new concept. Organized movements and coalitions across the globe have demonstrated the power of collective activity and coordinated actions when it comes to make systemic and societal changes in their respective issue areas. Although there are some structural difficulties that nonprofits face when deciding to engage in social change, such as funding limitations and lobbying restrictions, nonprofit organizations have a unique positioning in society to engage with the resources and networks that they do have access to and can easily leverage for efforts beyond their day-to-day activities.

Simple collaboration may seem to be an obvious driver of movement success but should be conducted and planned strategically amongst coalition partners in order to build strong coalition foundations from the beginning. The trust and deep relationships that are developed in a coalition will serve as an asset when it comes to navigating coalition challenges, and when individual coalition members come prepared to collaborate and share resources for the good of the movement, coalitions should find themselves moving closer to policy wins and noticeable impact in societies. Social movement and coalition success take time, effort and involves many challenges, but is a necessity in order for societies to move forward and strategically challenge systemic injustices. The nonprofit sector's strong role in the change-making game is no surprise but can certainly be taken to a new level when nonprofits step into the realm of social movements alongside their coalition partners and movement actors all striving for the same change.

## List of References

- ACLU. (2019). ACLU History. Retrieved from <https://www.aclu.org/about/aclu-history>.
- Alliance for Justice. (2011). Worry-Free Lobbying for Nonprofits: How to Use the 501(h) Election to Maximize Effectiveness.
- Almeida, P. (2008). The sequencing of success: Organizing templates and neoliberal policy outcomes. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 13(2), 165–187.
- Bornstein, David, and Davis, Susan, “Social Entrepreneurship: What Everyone Needs to Know.” Oxford University Press, 2010. Retrieved from [http://socialnaekonomija.si/wp-content/uploads/David\\_Bornstein\\_Susan\\_Davis\\_Social\\_Entrepreneurship.pdf](http://socialnaekonomija.si/wp-content/uploads/David_Bornstein_Susan_Davis_Social_Entrepreneurship.pdf).
- “Nonprofits Integrating Community Engagement Guide.” Building Movement Project, 2015. Retrieved from <https://www.buildingmovement.org/pdf/NICE.pdf>.
- “Civic Engagement & Public Policy.” *Minnesota Council of Nonprofits*, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.minnesotanonprofits.org/resources-tools/principles-practices-for-nonprofit-excellence/civic-engagement-and-public-policy>.
- Costello, Amy. “How Philanthropy ‘Captures’ Social Movements.” *Nonprofit Quarterly*, March 22, 2019. Retrieved from <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/how-philanthropy-captures-social-movements/>.
- Cress, Daniel M. (1997) “Nonprofit Incorporation Among Movements of the Poor: Pathways And Consequences For Homeless Social Movement Organizations.” *The Sociological Quarterly*, 38:2, 343-360, DOI: 10.1111/j.1533-8525.1997.tb00481.x
- Feldmann, D. (2016). *Social Movements for Good: How companies and causes create viral change*. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com>.
- Food Shift. (2019). About Food Shift. Retrieved from <http://foodshift.net>.
- Gelb, J., & Shogan, C. J. (2005). Community activism in the USA: Catholic hospital mergers and reproductive access. *Social Movement Studies*, 4(3), 209–229.
- Internal Revenue Service. (December 12, 2018). Lobbying. Retrieved from <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/lobbying>.

- Kallman, Meghan. "Professional Activism and Social Change." *Mobilizing Ideas* (blog), August 6, 2015. Retrieved from <https://mobilizingideas.wordpress.com/2015/08/06/professional-activism-and-social-change/>.
- Mason, Dyana P. (November 8, 2018). Yes, You Can - and Should! Nonprofit Advocacy as a Core Competency. *Nonprofit Quarterly*. Retrieved from <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/yes-can-nonprofit-advocacy-core-competency/>.
- NAACP. (2019). NAACP Legal History. Retrieved from <https://www.naacp.org/naACP-legal-team/naACP-legal-history/>.
- Niskanen Center. (2019, March 13). How Philanthropy Diverts Movements [Audio podcast]. Retrieved from <https://niskanencenter.org/blog/how-philanthropy-diverts-social-movements/>.
- "Nonprofit Service Organizations and Civic Engagement: Addressing Challenges and Moving Forward." Building Movement Project, 2007. Retrieved from [https://www.buildingmovement.org/pdf/Civic\\_Engagement\\_Report.pdf](https://www.buildingmovement.org/pdf/Civic_Engagement_Report.pdf).
- Oakland Rising. (2019). About Us. Retrieved from <https://www.oaklandrising.org/about>.
- Pastor, Manuel, and Rhonda Ortiz. "Making Change: How Social Movements Work - and How to Support Them." University of Southern California, March 2009.
- Schadler, B. Holly. "Chapter 1: Lobbying and Political Activities by 501(c)(4)s." *Bolder Advocacy*, 2012. Retrieved from [https://www.bolderadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/The\\_Connection\\_Ch1\\_paywall.pdf](https://www.bolderadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/The_Connection_Ch1_paywall.pdf).
- Schmitz, Paul. (2019) "Funding the Long Game in Collective Impact." *Collective Impact Forum*. Retrieved from <https://www.collectiveimpactforum.org/sites/default/files/Funding%20the%20Long%20Game%20in%20Collective%20Impact%20-%20Paul%20Schmitz.pdf>.
- Snow, David A., Sarah A. Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi, eds. *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing, 2004. Retrieved from <http://voidnetwork.gr/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/The-Blackwell-Companion-to-Social-Movements-Edited-by-David-A.-Snow-Sarah-A.-Soule-and-Hanspeter-Kriesi.pdf>.

“Social Service and Social Change: A Process Guide.” Building Movement Project, 2006. Retrieved from <https://www.buildingmovement.org/pdf/ProcessGuide.pdf>.

Sommerfeldt, Erich J., and Aimei Yang. “Relationship Networks as Strategic Issues Management: An Issue-Stage Framework of Social Movement Organization Network Strategies.” *Public Relations Review* 43, no. 4 (November 2017): 829–39. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2017.06.012>.

Soskis, Benjamin. “These Aren’t Ronald Reagan’s Budget Cuts.” *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, April 26, 2019. <https://www.philanthropy.com/article/Opinion-These-Arent-Ronald/239897>.

Stachowiak, Sarah. “Pathways for Change: 10 Theories to Inform Advocacy and Policy,” October 2013. Retrieved from <https://www.evaluationinnovation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Pathways-for-Change.pdf>.

“Taking the 501(h) Election.” *National Council of Nonprofits*, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/taking-the-501h-election>.

The Bridgespan Group. (2019). Mission and Vision Statements. Retrieved from <https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/library/nonprofit-management-tools-and-trends/mission-and-vision-statements>.

The Ohio State University: College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences. “Coalition Structure.” *Ohioline*, October 15, 2014. Retrieved from <https://ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/CDFS-4>.

Van Dyke, N., & Amos, B. (2017). Social movement coalitions: Formation, longevity, and success. *Sociology Compass*, 11(7). Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12489>.

## Appendix A: Guiding Interview Questions and Interviewee Biographies

### Sangeeta Chowdhry

- Senior Director of Economic Justice at Global Fund for Women
- Interviewed on July 18, 2019



### **Biography (retrieved from [www.globalfundforwomen.org](http://www.globalfundforwomen.org)):**

Sangeeta brings to Global Fund for Women years of experience in the non-profit and private sector with a focus over the past decade, on economic and environmental justice. Since joining Global Fund for Women, she has led a \$5.9million grant fund from the Dutch Foreign Ministry in support of grassroots women’s leadership for economic and political empowerment and ending violence in Asia and the Pacific; and has spearheaded a multi-year initiative in South & Southeast Asia to address trafficking in the context of labor and migration. She currently serves on the Board of Center for Health and Gender Equity.

Before coming to Global Fund, Sangeeta worked to support community solutions to improving access to safe water and sanitation. At the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation she led a 10-country study focused on bringing sanitation services to underserved urban populations across Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa and headed the Foundation’s initiative at the Acumen Fund piloting solutions to improve access to safe drinking water across India and Kenya. A native of India, Sangeeta has been engaged in various capacities in support of livelihoods projects – as Executive Director of League of Artisans, she worked to support local artisanal crafters and, prior to that, helped CARE India launch an institution focused on developing the livelihoods and microfinance sectors in India. At the American India Foundation, Sangeeta was involved in grant portfolio assessment and strategy development for livelihoods grant-making. Sangeeta holds a Masters in Public Administration (Program in Economic Policy Management) from Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs as well as a Masters in Electrical Engineering (Columbia) and in Physics (Northeastern University).

### **Interview Questions:**

- How does Global Fund for Women engage in advocacy work through its daily activities to contribute to broad social change?
- What does Global Fund for Women as a nonprofit organization bring to the social movement table, as opposed to what for-profits or other entities could do?

- Does your organization experience any limitations in the type of movement work it wish it could do, since it is a U.S. based nonprofit?
- Is Global Fund for Women involved in any coalitions, as a funder or organization itself?
- How does Global Fund for Women measure its impact in the global women's rights movement?
- What advice or recommendations would you give to nonprofits before they dive into advocacy work?

### **Cristy Dieterich**

- Refugee Health Coordinator for San Francisco, San Mateo and Marin Counties & Health Educator at the San Francisco Department of Health
- Coordinator of San Francisco Coalition of Asylee, Refugee and Immigrant Services (SF-CAIRS)
- Interviewed on July 5, 2019



### **Biography (retrieved from [www.worldaffairs.org](http://www.worldaffairs.org)):**

Cristy Dieterich is the Refugee Health Coordinator for San Francisco, San Mateo, and Marin Counties and the manager of Newcomers Health Program, based at Family Health Center. Since 2009 Cristy has partnered and lead educational efforts with the USCIS San Francisco's Asylum Office to conduct monthly outreach to newly granted Northern California asylees. Cristy is an active member in local refugee, immigrant, and human trafficking partnerships and initiatives, and sits on two Community Advisory Boards for Community Health Workers and Health Care Interpreters. Cristy leads efforts in continuous partnership and resource building as the Coordinator for the San Francisco Refugee Forum; SF Coalition of Asylee, Immigrant, and Refugee Services.

### **Interview Questions**

- What does SF-CAIRS actively do as a coalition with its members?
- What prompted the need for the SF-CAIRS coalition, and how were the partnerships initially formed?
- What have been the benefits of working in partnership with other organizations across San Francisco?
- What have been the difficulties of working in coalition with other organizations?
- What advantages and limitations do nonprofits bring to the social movement table, especially in coalitions?

- How has SF-CAIRS affected social movements and advocacy efforts surrounding immigration and refugees?
- What do nonprofits seek from their membership with SF-CAIRS?
- What advice or recommendations would you give to nonprofits before they dive into advocacy work, especially in coalitions?

### **Marissa Graciosa**

- Former Senior Advisor, Current Project Team Member at Building Movement Project
- Interviewed on June 18, 2019



### **Biography (retrieved from**

**[www.buildingmovementproject.com](http://www.buildingmovementproject.com)):**

Graciosa joined the Building Movement Project in 2019 bringing her many years of experience in community organizing, coalition building, and racial justice to the organization. Prior to joining BMP, she played several roles at Planned Parenthood Federation of America as the Director of Strategic Initiatives and as the National Director of Organizing through unprecedented attacks at the state and federal levels. Before joining PPFA, she worked for over a decade in the immigrant rights movement, as the Director of the Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM) at the Center for Community Change and in the national efforts led by the Alliance for Citizenship and the Reform Immigration for America Campaign. She played key roles in the mass immigrant mobilizations of 2006 and 2010 and has helped to build organizing and electoral capacity in key states through training, coaching, and strategic consulting. She has also led numerous issue and political campaigns, including a Chicago aldermanic race and the non-partisan voter registration and mobilization work of the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights.

### **Interview Questions:**

- What is the nonprofit sector's unique role in participating in social movements?
- What advantages and limitations do nonprofits bring to the social movement table, especially in coalitions?
- Do you believe nonprofits have an obligation to participate in social movements that tie to their causes, or other non-directly related movements?
- What advice or recommendations would you give to nonprofits before they dive into advocacy work, especially in coalitions?

**Sean Kirkpatrick**

- Coordinator of East Bay Refugee and Immigrant Forum (EBRIF)
- Interviewed on July 5, 2019

**Biography:**

Sean Kirkpatrick is the Coordinator of the East Bay Refugee and Immigrant Forum (EBRIF) and has 17 years of experience in consulting in the fields of community mental health and development, with a strong emphasis on supporting refugee and immigrant communities. As a leader in the EBRIF coalition, Sean brings extensive expertise and wisdom regarding the importance of navigating collective groups and partnerships for effective change and well-rounded services for refugee and immigrant communities. Sean has previously consulted for numerous organizations in the Bay Area, including the International Rescue Committee and the Korean Community Center of the East Bay. In addition to his role with EBRIF, Sean is also an Evaluation Consultant with CAMI Consulting.

**Interview Questions:**

- What does EBRIF actively do as a coalition with its members?
- What prompted the need for the EBRIF coalition, and how were the partnerships initially formed?
- What have been the benefits of working in partnership with other organizations across the East Bay?
- What have been the difficulties of working in coalition with other organizations?
- What advantages and limitations do nonprofits bring to the social movement table, especially in coalitions?
- How has EBRIF affected social movements and advocacy efforts surrounding immigration and refugees?
- What do nonprofits seek from their membership with EBRIF?
- What advice or recommendations would you give to nonprofits before they dive into advocacy work, especially in coalitions?



**Kimi Lee**

- Executive Director of Bay Rising
- Interviewed on July 18, 2019

**Biography (retrieved from [www.bayrising.org](http://www.bayrising.org)):**

Kimi Lee brings over two decades of experience organizing and working with social justice organizations to her role as the Executive Director of Bay Rising. Kimi has organized students with the University of California Student Association and served as field director for the ACLU of Southern California, executive director of the Garment Worker Center, lead organizer of the United Workers Congress, among many other leadership roles. Her first-generation family immigrated to the U.S. from Burma in 1971.

**Interview Questions:**

- What does Bay Rising actively do as a coalition with its members?
- What have been the benefits of working in partnership with other organizations across the Bay Area?
- What have been the difficulties of working in coalition with other organizations?
- What advantages and limitations do nonprofits bring to the social movement table, especially in coalitions?
- What do nonprofits seek from their membership with Bay Rising?
- What advice or recommendations would you give to nonprofits before they dive into advocacy work, especially in coalitions?

**Landon Williams**

- Senior Director of Place at the San Francisco Foundation
- Former Member – Black Panther Party
- Interviewed on July 8, 2019

**Biography:**

Landon Williams is the Senior Director for Anchoring Communities at The San Francisco Foundation. Williams native of Berkeley with more than 30 years of experience in community organizing and economic development. He has served as an Assistant to the City Manager for the City of Berkeley and was previously a member of the Black Panther



is a

Party. At The San Francisco Foundation, Williams directed the FAITHS Initiative for six years from 2000 through 2006. Williams later returned to The San Francisco Foundation in his current position as Senior Director for Anchoring Communities where he plays a key role in facilitating collaboratives of nonprofits and other organizations all around the Bay Area that work towards housing and economic justice.

**Interview Questions**

- How does the San Francisco Foundation use collaborative models to support change and social movements?
- How has the San Francisco Foundation affected social movements and advocacy efforts in the Bay Area?
- What have been the benefits of working in coalition with other organizations?
- What have been the difficulties of working in coalition with other organizations?
- Regarding your experiences in the Black Panther Party, what were the strengths and challenges of the Rainbow Coalition in advancing the Black Panther Party's mission?
- What advice or recommendations would you give to nonprofits before they dive into advocacy work, especially in coalitions?

## Author's Biography

Michaela Nee, MNA earned her Bachelor's of Arts in International Studies and French with a minor in Communications from the University of Denver, and now holds her Master of Nonprofit Administration from the University of San Francisco. Throughout her professional and academic career, Michaela has worked with numerous nonprofit organizations domestically and internationally that advance global sustainable development through education, women's rights, environmental sustainability, and access to health care. At the University of Denver, she was Co-President of DU Service & Change where she mentored students in organizing service events, coordinated volunteer events, and took a lead role in the annual Day of Action that brought over 400 elementary students and family members to the campus as a college access initiative. She also co-founded Human 2 Human to facilitate events on campus that unite migrant and domestic residents of the U.S. and bridge gaps of misunderstanding amongst them.



Through her nonprofit and community engagement work, Michaela has built her skillset and expertise in program management, operations, partnership navigation, and community organizing for nonprofit and service-related causes. Michaela received the DU Kimmy Foundation Community Service Professional Award and the Pioneer Award in 2018 from the University of Denver in recognition for her commitment to public good and high academic achievements. Moving forward, Michaela aspires to continue working in the Bay Area nonprofit sector in program management and operations to increase access to human rights, sustainable development, and quality of life for all.